A Decade of Trauma Treatment and Human Rights Work in Iraq

On the occasion of its 10th anniversary, the Jiyan Foundation for Human Rights urges the Iraqi government to enhance rehabilitation services for survivors of human rights abuses.

Erbil, 25 May 2015 – After ten years of successful non-profit work, the Jiyan Foundation for Human Rights thanks its national and international supporters and calls on the Iraqi government to strengthen local NGOs, to invest in improved mental health services and to adequately assist survivors of violence.

"It is with mixed emotions that we look back at our achievements", says Salah Ahmad, founder and president of the Jiyan Foundation. "On the one hand, we are proud to have treated more than 20,000 survivors of violence, to hear their positive feedback, and to witness how therapy changed their lives for the better. On the other hand, we are sad to see steadily rising patient numbers. Throughout the past ten years, violence has occurred in too many forms in Iraq. It has destroyed individuals, entire families and the social fabric of our society at large. Yet victims' distress can hardly be relieved as the Iraqi mental health services are still underdeveloped, lack qualified staff and facilities."

That is why the Jiyan Foundation continues to train local trauma therapists and mental health professionals and to offer psychological and medical treatment to those who suffered human rights abuses. The Jiyan Foundation's long lasting experience makes it a knowledgeable third party willing to support the Iraqi government in improving victims' access to rehabilitation services.

"According to the UN Convention against Torture and the UN Basic Principles on the Right to a Remedy, survivors of torture and violence are entitled to rehabilitation and reintegration services", emphasizes Michael Lehmann, vice-president and director of strategy. "We are eager to assist Iraqi decision-makers with our expertise, staff capacities and networking structures. The long-term goal must be to install a well-functioning national support system for victims of violence."

The Jiyan Foundation for Human Rights, originally established as Kirkuk Center for Torture Victims in 2005, is a human rights organization offering free rehabilitation services to survivors of torture and inhuman treatment in Iraq. The Jiyan Foundation is supported by the German Foreign Office, the European Union, the United Nations, the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and private donors.